

Case 3 – Lataisha Brown

Youth: Lataisha Brown

Gender: Female

School: Court and
Community School

Age 14

SSN: 123-00-
4567

Ethnicity: African-American

Language: English

Family Information

Mother: Vivian Brown

Age: 30

Address: Whereabouts unknown

Ethnicity: African-American

Employment: Unknown

Father: Terrell Able

Age: 35

Address: 165 Charter Way
Stockton, CA

Ethnicity: African American

Employment: Day labor in
construction

Sibling Information:

Sibling Name: Lance Brown

Age: 11

Sibling Name: Marcus Brown

Age: 10

Substitute Care Provider

Name: Loretta Davis

Age: 35

Address: 3535 M Street
Oakland, CA

Employment: Registered
Nurse

Ethnicity: African-American

Current Referral/Circumstances:

Oakland Police officers assigned to Vice unit were working an undercover operation to combat prostitution in the area of downtown Oakland. An officer observed Lataisha, 14, walking on East 14th Street, which is well known for prostitution activity. The officers pulled up next to the minor, who walked up to their car window. The officer asked her, "Are you dating?" and she replied flippantly, "I don't date cops." After a short conversation, Lataisha agreed to get into the vehicle and perform sexual acts on the undercover officer for \$120, minus the cost of the hotel room. Officers pulled the vehicle over, identified themselves and arrested Lataisha on charges of Solicit Act of Prostitution, a misdemeanor. She was booked into Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

The court ordered a joint assessment and report under Welfare and Institutions Code 241.1 because of Lataisha's status as a WIC 300 court dependent in relative care. The court then ordered that Lataisha's needs were best handled with a dual jurisdiction with the Probation Department acting as the lead agency.

Prior Juvenile Probation History:

At age 11, Lataisha was arrested for petty theft and trespassing. Probation contacted Child Welfare Services regarding the arrest and closed the case without further referral.

Child Welfare/Juvenile Dependency Information:

Lataisha Brown, 14, is a dependent of the Juvenile Court under the care and custody of Child Welfare Services. Lataisha and her younger brothers were removed from the care of their mother when Lataisha was 10 years old.

Child Welfare Services records indicate that Lataisha's mother and father have a long history of crack cocaine abuse and have both been arrested and convicted on child endangerment. Lataisha and her brothers were removed from a family home located in a condemned building that was unsafe and unsanitary with no water, little food and rodent and cockroach infestation. Lataisha's parents were frequently homeless during her first 10 years, living in cars, rundown motels and sometimes under freeway overpasses. At the time of removal, the mother was a single parent who was struggling with significant substance addiction. The children's father had left about a year prior to return to Stockton, where he was reported to belong to a local gang.

Lataisha's mother and father were offered 12 months of Family Reunification while the children were placed with their maternal aunt Loretta Davis and her husband Reginald, but failed to successfully reunify. Since all three children had lived with their aunt for such a long period, but she was unwilling to commit to adoption, the children continued in Permanent Placement program with the aunt as the planned permanent living arrangement.

Prior to Lataisha's arrest, her aunt had requested that Lataisha be removed from her care because she was engaging in risky sexual behaviors in the home, acted out with defiance and anger when her aunt attempted to set limit and frequently ran from the home, not returning for several days at a time. Her younger brothers have remained in the care of their aunt in long-term foster care.

Interviews with Minor:

When interviewed, Lataisha was largely uncooperative with the probation officer, responding in one or two word responses. She could be engaged only when discussing her younger siblings, Marcus and Lance, who she has strong protective feelings for.

Lataisha stated that she does not need adults to provide or protect her. She has learned how to take care of herself and does not want to cooperate with Probation and stated she will run away from anywhere that she is placed.

Lataisha remained largely silent during most of the interview, using shrugs and disengaging from interaction by "hooding up."

Interview with Child Welfare Services Social Worker

Due to the extensive involvement of Child Welfare Services with Lataisha and her brothers, Child Welfare Services records and the assigned social worker were helpful in understanding Lataisha's family and social history.

Lataisha is the oldest of three children born to Vivian Brown and Terrell Able, both born and raised in Stockton, California. Lataisha was born in Stockton, California and the young family struggled as a result of a lack of formal education and drug abuse problems in both parents. CWS records show 24 referrals in both San Joaquin and Alameda Counties associated with general neglect, emotional abuse and caretaker absence.

Her mother, Vivian, was 18 when Lataisha was born and she dropped out of high school when she became pregnant in her junior year. Vivian did not have prenatal care prior to Lataisha's birth and Lataisha was positive for cocaine at birth. Child Welfare Services provided Emergency Response services in the early week of Lataisha's life. Terrell, five years older than Vivian, graduated high school and worked in the construction field as a day laborer, but began struggling with drug use in his late teens and early 20s.

Following the birth of Lataisha's brothers, the family relocated to Oakland when Terrell found it difficult to find work in the Stockton area. Neither Lance nor Marcus tested positive for drugs at birth. The move was stressful and largely unsuccessful economically for the family and as a result, Vivian's substance abuse problems worsened to the point that Terrell separated from the family and returned to Stockton. Home and care conditions worsened for all three children until CWS removed them from the care of their mother and placed them in relative care when her mother failed to protect Lataisha from sexual abuse by a male she was living with.

Both parents were offered 12 months of Family Reunification services. Vivian's substance abuse problems continued to worsen and she cut off contact with her children and extended family. She was last seen in Richmond, California, at a homeless shelter during poor weather two years ago.

Terrell made some efforts to complete his service plan during the reunification period and also made efforts to be in contact with and parent Lataisha, who is often distant and oppositional to his efforts. His motivation to complete his service plan flagged when it was clear to him that his daughter was not responding to his efforts.

When Family Reunification services were terminated after 12 months, Lataisha's aunt agreed to provide care for all three children until adulthood, but stated she did not want to assume legal guardianship or adopt the children out of respect for her sister. At the Permanency Selection and Implementation Hearing, a plan of long term foster care was adopted and both parents' parental rights remain intact.

The aunt has cared for the siblings for four years. About a month before Lataisha's most recent arrest, Lataisha's behavior was escalating in her aunt's home, repeatedly running away and refusing parental direction. As a result, Ms. Davis requested that Lataisha be removed from her home. Her Child Welfare worker had been looking for prospective family members, foster homes and group home placements for Lataisha when she was arrested on current charges.

Lance and Marcus remain in Ms. Davis' care. Lataisha's paternal grandparents live in Sacramento area.

Lataisha has struggled with school attendance for her entire academic career. She has never been placed in the same school for long enough to allow assessment of need for special education services. She struggles with reading and writing, but enjoys math and all of the social activities at school, including school dances. She enjoys art - drawing, painting and poetry. She has never worked.

Lataisha became sexually active at age 12 and has a history of sexually transmitted diseases and was also caught smoking marijuana. She was diagnosed with Type I diabetes when she was 12 years old and is insulin dependent. She has struggled with occasional asthma attacks associated with colds.

Lataisha has been referred for counseling, both group and individual, but she has largely avoided participation. Her sexual abuse trauma has remained untreated.

Interviews with Parents

Lataisha's mother, Vivian Brown, could not be contacted for an interview because her whereabouts have not been known for two years. Her last known address in Richmond, California. Her biological father, Terrell Able, was contacted in Stockton, California.

He reported that he has had intermittent contact with Lataisha and his sons over the past four years. He has struggled with drug abuse and unemployment, though he has been clean and sober for the past year and is now working regularly on a large building construction project in downtown Stockton. He has a friendly relationship with the relative care provider, who invites him to visit and to family celebrations. While his relationship with his boys is close and positive as long as he is free from drug use, his relationship with Lataisha is strained.

Terrell would like to be considered for placement of Lataisha, but he is currently living in a rooming house and does not currently have room for her. In addition, he feels that Lataisha needs treatment for her childhood neglect and sexual abuse before he can consider taking custody of her.

Interview with Approved Relative Care Provider

Loretta Davis and her husband Reginald assumed responsibility and care of her sister Vivian's children after a long and turbulent period for the family. Loretta was devastated to learn that Lataisha had been sexually abused by a casual man friend of Vivian's and was shocked to hear about the desperate living situation that her niece and nephews had endured. She is heart-broken about her sister's serious substance abuse problems and worries all the time about her welfare.

Loretta and Reginald made impressive progress with Marcus and Lance, but Lataisha has struggled with school, her behavior in their home and with early involvement in unsafe sexual behaviors since she came to live with them. Loretta and Reginald had to institute a set of clear rules regarding Lataisha's interaction with Reginald because Lataisha began engaging in sexually provocative and seductive behaviors with him.

Initially, Loretta focused on helping Lataisha to bring her health problems under control and to allow her to adjust to the structure and expectations of their home. She was successful in getting Lataisha's diabetes diagnosed and somewhat stabilized and focused on establishing a healthy diet and exercise plan for the girl.

Loretta and Reginald have had limited success in getting Lataisha to meaningfully engage in school work. Lataisha prefers courses focused on art and on the school's social activities and she tends to cut classes focused on core competencies.

During the past two years, Loretta and Reginald have worked hard to make progress on Lataisha's behavior but her risk taking behaviors have escalated out of control.